

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

AFQIR-CO-6

WASHINGTON

20 Sep 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Project Treasure Island (Exploitation of Open Source
Slavic Publications)

1. Considerable preliminary discussion has taken place in connection with a program designed to extract basic air intelligence information from Slavic publications in the Library of Congress. The Air Force has assigned the name "Treasure Island" to this project.

2. Informal discussions have given rise to the following questions:

a. Will the Air Force be duplicating similar projects being conducted by other agencies?

b. Will the Air Force be operating in its field of dominant interest?

c. Will such a project lead to unhealthy competition for translators?

3. In view of the fact that this project is designed for the procurement of air information it is believed that the answer to 2 b. above is in the affirmative. However, it is considered that the Central Intelligence Agency is the proper medium through which to arrive at answers 2 a and 2 c. In this connection, only low order, nontechnical translators are envisioned. This nucleus of translators would tend to broaden rather than narrow the field. Moreover, the intent is to set up not a super extracting agency but a modest effort in the air intelligence field.

4. A brief of the proposed project is inclosed. It is requested that such comment be made, as you consider appropriate, in connection with paragraph 2 above.

/s/

1 Incl
Treasure Island Brief

C. F. CABELL
Major General, USAF
Director of Intelligence, Office of
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TREASURE ISLAND

THE PROBLEM

1. To organize an extracting and digesting service to exploit for Air intelligence purposes open sources, including Slavic publications of all kinds.

HYPOTHESIS

2. The need for intelligence materials and open source information will become increasingly acute.

DISCUSSION

3. A very large portion of information pertinent to the mission of the Air Intelligence Division is available in open source materials. The intelligence mission cannot be accomplished in a satisfactory manner without a systematic and thorough exploitation of unclassified publications, such as books, periodicals, newspapers, foreign government handbooks, broadcasts, atlases, etc. At present, little exploitation is being carried out although the source materials are available in the United States. Consequently, a great deal of pertinent information is unavailable for purposes of air intelligence analyses. (See Appendix A).

4. The extracting service would have to be financed, yet cost requirements cannot be estimated at this juncture, because it is not known which of the existing facilities can be brought into the scheme. It is clear, however, that the investment required to finance Treasure Island will be small, at least in relation to its usefulness. It is believed that, within a few years, it will be possible to say: "Never before was so much intelligence gained from so small a cost."

CONCLUSIONS

5. At the present time the Air Intelligence Division does not receive basic information from open sources either in sufficient quantity or in a quality suited to its needs.

6. The satisfactory accomplishment of the air intelligence mission requires a coordinated effort by the Directorate of Intelligence and other agencies for the exploitation of open source materials.

7. The organization of such an effort requires the setting-up in the Directorate of Intelligence of a special unit, tentatively called Basic Information Section. The extracting service can best be started through a contract with the Library of Congress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. That a Basic Information Section be set up in the Directorate of Intelligence.

9. That the Basic Information Section be instructed to set up and supervise a service for the extraction of pertinent information from Slavic open source materials.

10. That the Basic Information Section be directed to negotiate a contract with the Library of Congress in order to have the Library do preliminary indexing and searching, and in order to start the unit processing current books and the backlog.

SECRET

APPENDIX "A"

INTELLIGENCE FROM OPEN SOURCE MATERIALS

INDEX

DISCUSSION

The Value of Open Source Materials

Current Exploitation of Open Source Materials

Remedies

Results of Discussions with the Library of Congress

Open Questions

Basic Information Section

Academic Sources of Intelligence

ANNEXES

Annex I - Chart, Open Source Procurement
Organization

APPENDIX "A"

INTELLIGENCE FROM OPEN SOURCE MATERIALS

SUMMARY

1. Open source materials are of great value to intelligence. A great deal of valuable air information can be culled from publications, such as books, periodicals, newspapers, broadcasts, and government reports.
2. At present open source materials are inadequately exploited. The Air Intelligence Division does not obtain the information contained in such materials nor is there an organization which is extracting air intelligence data that are available in such materials.
3. There is a great need for reorganizing methods and procedures for the procurement of open source intelligence. Such a reorganization requires the setting-up of a Basic Information Section in the Directorate of Intelligence; the setting-up of an Administrative, Filing and Publishing Section in the Library of Congress; the establishment of procurement units in the Library of Congress; the creation of an extracting unit in the Library of Congress; and a coordination with extracting and abstracting units in the army, the CIA, and other government agencies.

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APPENDIX "A"

INTELLIGENCE FROM OPEN SOURCE MATERIALS

DISCUSSION

1. The Value of Open Source Materials

a. Intelligence work is based on two different types of materials: open and classified. Classified materials include those which are originated or processed by United States governmental agencies and which are kept under strict security restrictions. Some of these materials are obtained by secret means. In most instances, they report on facts and developments which foreign nations want to keep secret. Among the open sources are those which are originated by foreign governmental or non-governmental agencies, to which the originator does not attach security restrictions. These materials can usually be bought in the open market or obtained without too many difficulties. They include magazines, newspapers, books, government reports and documents, broadcasts and news pictures.

b. In customary intelligence routine, great stress is laid on working with classified materials. The importance of the classified materials cannot, of course, be minimized in any manner; a large percentage of significant facts cannot be gathered except through secret sources. Yet, the two types of source materials complement and supplement each other; taken singly none of them gives the complete picture. Despite the fact that classified intelligence documents will be most profitable if they are correlated with open source materials, the value of the open sources is often underrated. Only small efforts are made to procure and exploit the unclassified type of intelligence source materials.

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c. It is sometimes felt that open sources do not contain any materials that are worth gathering. At least, this is supposed to be true with respect to the open sources published by dictatorial countries, the censor allegedly cutting out anything that may be of use to foreign intelligence services. However, experience with the German censorship during the war showed that even very important military information can be collected from newspapers. For example, it was believed that German P/T boats were armed with 20mm guns. Interpretation of a photograph published in a German newspaper showed that these boats actually carried 40mm guns. On the authority of General Donovan, it appears that most of the information about the German oil industry was gathered from newspapers. It may be added that strategic and tactical doctrines, too, were freely discussed in German technical publications. For example, the joint employment of aircraft and tanks was described as early as 1934 by a German General in a book which was easily obtainable all over the world for \$2.50; the tactics which he had outlined were applied by the Germans throughout the early campaigns of the second world war.

d. However severe, censorship is never fool-proof. Censorship personnel is rarely too intelligent, and almost never well informed. Very often items are published of which the significance escapes the censor. Descriptions of cities and plants usually give away some good clues. Obituaries often contain inadvertent references to a person's place of work; advertisements or propaganda indicate the output of a given plant; technical discussions of production processes sometimes permit deductions as to locations, quality and output. The Russian press offers, moreover, the specific advantage that (1) the labor crews of factories frequently send telegrams to Stalin; (2) praise

is given to specifically named plants which exceeded their output assignment; and (3) criticism is often voiced of production achievements in named factories. Although many of these items are camouflaged, and incompletely reproduced, additional information from classified as well as open sources usually permits the completion of the story.

e. Censorship requirements are changeable. Items that are secret now were freely revealed a few years ago. From time to time, facts, such as locations and types of factories, remain more or less constant; present-day censorship is not necessarily an obstacle to collecting pertinent information. For example, the Russians do not now publish information about uranium deposits. Yet the literature contains many references to uranium deposits in the Soviet Union. Time and again, it was possible to evaluate classified reports on the discovery of uranium on the basis of previously published geological reports; in some instances, it was forecast where the Russians would soon start digging for the uranium in Czechoslovakia. For that matter, current Russian publications occasionally contain references to "rare minerals" which, sometimes, turn out to be uranium.

f. In the specific field of SV intelligence, there are several target categories which must needs be worked up on the basis of open materials. It is not implied that now useful information on these categories is being obtained from classified sources, but the fact remains that the over-all picture of these categories has been gained through open sources, including those German-captured documents which had been worked up from Russian open publications.

g. In the railroad category; rail lines, trackage, stations, bridges, marshalling yards, over-all tonnages carried, types of commodities carried, types of rolling stock used, capacity of locomotives and freight cars were obtained from open sources. There is also avail-

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able a great deal of information about railroad operations. There is no information on a few secret rail lines, nor on freight train time tables, but open information is adequate to list most of the important rail targets and, if necessary, to permit the SV Branch, without benefit of classified information, to set up rail targets the destruction of which would greatly impair Soviet rail capacity.

h. An estimated 75 per cent of the electric power stations listed in SV files were identified on the basis of open materials. At the present time, the Soviets do not seem to censor news about power stations, with the exception of information on grid systems. The Soviets, usually, announce when a power station starts operations; in some instances they go as far as revealing details about generators, including the places of production, capacity, plant layout, etc. Negative clues can be obtained about areas which are not mentioned. For example, the Chusovoy hydro-electric program which figured prominently in the news up to about two years ago, apparently is no longer commented upon. Since there is information about various important atomic developments in that area, Soviet silence provides some kind of a confirmation.

i. It is most surprising that a great amount of open source information is obtained on highly classified industrial categories. The discovery of new oil fields is usually reported in the Soviet press. The British, by patient research in papers and periodicals, were able to identify about 40 aircraft plants, including their locations and numbers.

j. Soviet papers contain frequent mention of new cities. It will be recalled that, according to Marshal Rundstedt, the German army was greatly handicapped because their maps failed to show newly erected cities. If the Germans had sufficiently exploited the open sources of information, most of the gaps in their knowledge of Russian towns would have been closed.

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k. A good illustration of the value of open source materials is provided by the work done by John Scott, the American engineer who spent many years in Russia. Early during the war the Board of Economic Warfare put him on the job of collecting open source information on Russia. With only four female assistants, Scott produced an 815-page volume "Russia East of the Volga". Practically every industrial category and all minerals were covered in the document, which also listed dozens of new cities. Even today, the Scott Report is often used to great advantage. It contains information about many plants and places concerning which no other data are available in SV files.

l. Open sources are indispensable for over-all economic and industrial analyses. Misleading and incomplete though Russian statistics are, they are nevertheless the only available basis for statistical evaluations of the Soviet war potential, the productivity of individual industries, and the general organization of the Soviet economy. Without the periodic reports on the progress of the Five Year Plans, no over-all picture of Soviet capabilities and vulnerabilities could be obtained, despite the fact that no Russian statement can be accepted at face value, but must be thoroughly analyzed and checked with other data.

m. Open materials are equally needed for the analysis of strategically vital categories. For example, without unclassified basic geographic data, such as climate, freezing conditions of rivers, water depths, chemical content of water, elevations, roads, geology, etc., it would be very difficult to crack the secrets of the Soviet atomic program.

n. Russian open sources contain a great number of photographs and other pictorial materials, including plant layouts. There are quite a few industrial pictures which could be used for target folders. There are also pictures of Russian products which would give clues as

SECRET 5 -

SECRET

to output of specific plants and quality of Russian technology. There are numerous pictures of outstanding architectural structures which would be very valuable as identifiable landmarks.

c. It is concluded that the exploitation of open sources is not only a very valuable but actually an indispensable part of air intelligence operations.

2. Current Exploitation of Open Source Materials

a. Preliminary surveys have shown that a very large percentage of total Russian open-source materials are available in the United States. In the Washington area alone, the Library of Congress plus various other government agencies, such as the CIA, Army Library, and State Department have been receiving, during the past five to ten years, at least one-half, or more, of the Russian output in publications. Large university libraries, such as Harvard, Columbia, Berkeley, and the New York Public Library also possess considerable collections of Russian materials. There are innumerable small but nevertheless valuable Slavic libraries in the hands of minor universities, special research organizations, industrial firms and private individuals. The Library of Congress is now trying to obtain all current Soviet publications on a regular basis.

b. Several agencies have been set up to produce bibliographies, abstracts and digests from these materials. The Strategic Vulnerability Branch receives about a dozen of such publications, not including technological abstracts produced by private agencies. Some information is extracted by SV analysts from English-language publications issued by the Soviet government. From time to time, additional information is culled from the digests published by the British Joint Intelligence Board. Recently, the CIA started the Soviet Press Extracts which hold out some promise, but, notwithstanding this seemingly

-6-SECRET

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large quantity of open source materials there is no flow of information; there is, at best, a trickle.

c. The reasons for this highly unsatisfactory state of affairs are the following:

- (1) The extracts and digests are mostly made for purposes which are totally different from the mission of the Air Intelligence Division.
- (2) Most of the extracts are actually made by people unfamiliar with air intelligence requirements. Many digests, especially the Daily Reports on Foreign Radio Broadcasts, attempt to reproduce current news and propaganda, but consistently omit intelligence data.
- (3) The confusion in the abstracting field has had the deplorable consequence that, while many items are reproduced in most of the publications, there is not, by a long shot, a complete coverage of all the materials that are actually available. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of these unorganized and uncoordinated digests is so large that it is very idfficult for the SV Branch to handle them properly.
- (4) While every abstracting service tries to include representative Soviet publications, such as Pravda and Izvestiya, little attention is given to books, government publications, (for example directories), pictures or maps. Hence, a great many of the valuable sources are not exploited, while other sources are exploited several times over, but each time in a manner not suitable to the Air Intelligence Division.

3. Remedies

- a. A preliminary survey of the situation as well as discussions

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with specialists in the abstracting field have shown that it would not be practical to organize one big independent super-abstracting service which could serve all the interests of all the agencies. Even if such a service were practical, the setting-up of a special agency would require a very long time. Moreover, there would be no certainty that air force intelligence requirements would be satisfied unless, of course, the air force would be able to exert control over operations.

b. It would, therefore, be necessary to make use of the abstracting units that already exist. An arrangement with such units would be profitable not only for budgetary reasons but also because some of these units have control over source materials.

c. At the same time, since present extracting staffs are small and overworked, and since a great deal of the required work is not being done, the establishment of new extracting units cannot be averted.

d. Hence, a solution must be found which (1) avoids the setting-up of one independent super-extracting agency; (2) achieves a maximum of cooperation from existing agencies; and (3) provides facilities for the carrying-out of such extracting services as are necessary if a complete coverage of open source materials is to be achieved.

e. Before a satisfactory plan for the division of labor among the various would-be participants in the program can be evolved, it is necessary as a preliminary, to determine which sources ought to be processed and to locate the source materials not now in Washington but available elsewhere in the United States. Such a preliminary job must needs be done by the Library of Congress which would have to be given a contract in order to enable them to complete their index of Slavic materials and to make full use of the Union Catalogue.

4. Results of Discussions with the Library of Congress

a. In informal discussions with representatives of the Library

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of Congress, it was determined that an extracting service could not function satisfactorily without a searching unit permanently operating in the Library, or without a routine channel to the Acquisitions Division.

b. It was thought advisable that the Library of Congress participate in any extracting scheme that might be evolved. The Library is the government's purchasing agent for foreign publications and it possesses what is probably the country's largest Slavic collection. The Library is the organization most suited for locating and loaning operations and it is the best medium for the camouflage of the entire undertaking.

c. There was no argument about the need for a new unit if the backlog of books and other publications as well as the current accessions of books are to be handled. The backlog is estimated to comprise 20,000 books, more than 30,000 periodicals and more than 100,000 newspapers, not to mention the backlog of other materials, such as broadcasts, for example. It has been tentatively estimated that such a unit would require about 50 extractors and indexers and 10 CAF's. A unit of that size could process the backlog in 5 to 6 years, and also handle current acquisitions of books and government reports. Such a new unit would work most efficiently in the Library of Congress. (see Annex I).

d. With respect to the actual processing of the materials, it would be most effective if extracts were done on check sheets listing a limited number of pertinent questions, such as those on the target information sheets. At the end of each check sheet a short digest of the processed material would be appended. The extract sheets would then be collected and consolidated and put into a publication, to be issued at regular intervals, preferably weekly. The information would also be

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maintained in a central file.

e. The discussions suggested the advisability of limiting the scope of the extraction effort. If, for example, political information were processed, the entire project would have to be very large in size, while the expenditure would not be worth the result, certainly not in so far as the Air Intelligence Division is concerned. The extracting service could be profitably limited to the fields of economic and industrial information related to strategic vulnerability, technical air information, air arm and civil air information, biographical air information, and air geography.

f. It was recognized that even within this "limitation" economy of effort could be practiced. For example, a great deal of information may be available on the paper industry, but there might be no current need for this information; hence, it would be wasteful to process and reproduce it. However, since intelligence needs cannot be anticipated, and since it is conceivable that, for one reason or another, even the paper industry may assume importance, a central file would have to be maintained in such a manner that, at a moment's notice, any inactive category can be worked up. It might even be advisable to maintain the file for subjects which hardly ever will become of interest to the Air Intelligence Division, simply because another government agency may want to participate in the program at a later date. It would be a good selling point to have all the information indexed and cross-indexed so that extracts of any kind can be made.

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clipping method.*

g. For various technical reasons, it is believed that the Library of Congress would be the logical agency to put in charge of both the actual publishing and the central file. In order to get the extracting effort going it would simply be necessary for the air

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force to make a contract with the Library of Congress which then would set up the various activities and units outlined above. It is believed that once the extracting service has been started, cooperation from other agencies will be obtained more easily.

5. Open Questions

a. Up to this point, there is not much room for disagreement about the organization of the extracting services. Difficulties arise, however, with respect to the ways and means by which other government agencies and private abstracting firms could, or should, be brought into the scheme. It is relatively easy to conceive of a set-up by which the labor would be efficiently and equitably divided. For example, if the Library of Congress would handle current books, government periodicals, and the backlog of periodicals and newspapers, the Army Library, which operates a periodicals abstracting service, could handle current periodicals. The CIA, which already has made a start in the field of newspaper abstracting, could take over current newspapers. The CIA also has facilities for radio monitoring and for the procurement of industrial documents. Contracts could be made with private firms for the processing of technological and scientific materials. Specialized organizations, such as the Photo Library and the Aero Chart Service, could profitably participate in the processing. The extracting services would have to be coordinated with the Air Research Unit at the Library of Congress. It would also be advisable to arrange for a division of labor with the British JIB.

b. Although such an over-all organization can be conceived in theory (See Annex I), it must be anticipated that various administrative and "political" obstacles will arise. It is obvious, at any rate, that the setting-up of a coordinated effort on such a scale will require a great deal of work. Lengthy negotiations will be required.

-11-
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Even after contracts will have been concluded, adjustments will be necessary quite frequently.

6. To sum up: in order to get a fully satisfactory service specializing in the extraction of intelligence from open source materials and, at the same time, to derive benefits from the research done at military and civilian schools, it is necessary to set up a Basic Information Section in the Directorate of Intelligence. This Section would maintain liaison with military and civilian schools and control the administration of the extracting services. This administration, to be located in the Library of Congress, would control procurement of materials, maintain liaison with the Acquisitions Division in the Library, keep a central file, and publish the extracts. The administration would control the various extracting units, located in the Library of Congress and in other government agencies. The work would most advantageously be divided up in such a manner that each participating agency would handle one major category of open source materials.

7. The total manpower and money requirements of the scheme cannot be estimated at this juncture, because it is not known which existing facilities can be brought into the scheme. An exact budgetary estimate must wait till the time when negotiations with various government agencies will have been engaged. It is clear, however, that the investment required to undertake the Treasure Island scheme will be relatively small and that the managerial difficulties and costs will be minor. The gain in terms of information obtained will, by contract, be very large. It is more than probable, indeed certain, that within a few years it will be said that never before in the history of American intelligence was so simple and inexpensive an effort needed to produce so great and so valuable a return.

h. Paragraph 5a of the plan calls for a Basic Information Section to coordinate the extracting of intelligence information by the Library of Congress (non-intelligence), Army Map Service (non-intelligence), CIA (intelligence), Photo Library (non-intelligence), Aero Chart Service (non-intelligence) and private firms (non-intelligence).

(1) CIA is the authorized coordinator of intelligence for the US Government.

(2) Only one of the above extracting parties is an intelligence organization.

J. J. BAGNALL

Encl: 1 (Treasure Island Study)

SECRET

APPENDIX "A"

INTELLIGENCE FROM OPEN SOURCE MATERIALS

INDEX

DISCUSSION

The Value of Open Source Materials

Current Exploitation of Open Source Materials

Remedies

Results of Discussions with the Library of Congress

Open Questions

Basic Information Section

Academic Sources of Intelligence

ANNEXES

Annex I - Chart, Open Source Procurement
Organization

SECRET

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SUMMARY

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2. At present open source materials are inadequately exploited. The Air Intelligence Division does not obtain the information contained in such materials nor is there an organization which is extracting air intelligence data that are available in such materials.

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